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Review: *Fifteenth-Century Liturgical Music, IX: Mass Music by Bedyngham and his Contemporaries*. Early English Church Music, 58. Transcribed by Timothy Symons and edited by Gareth Curtis and David Fallows. London: British Academy/Stainer & Bell, 2017.

As David Fallows, Gareth Curtis, and Timothy Symons note in the most recent volume of Early English Church Music [EECM], John Bedyngham was clearly a figure whose music enjoyed international appeal during his lifetime. His secular output seems to have been rather better known than his sacred—a state of affairs that arguably continues today. It is therefore pleasing to see a volume devoted to the sacred output of this important and unfairly overlooked composer and that of his contemporaries.

The selection of pieces for this volume highlights an enduring problem for those of us interested in this repertory. Only two of the works here presented are by the composer named on the spine; his 'contemporaries' outnumber him, and all are anonymous. As pleasing as it is to have his entire Mass output collected in one edition (useful since, though both are in Rebecca Gerber's edition of Trent 88, they are somewhat lost in the enormity of the repertory contained within), this is not an *opera omnia* and we are unable to consider Bedyngham's sacred and secular repertory together without recourse to the collection of his songs edited in David Fallows's excellent *Musica Britannica* volume.¹ Of course, it was never intended to perform such a function and should not be judged in these terms. English composers for whom we could produce a collected edition of reasonable length number but a few. The challenge is therefore to find other ways to group such English works together in a manner which makes sense and enables interesting connections to be made.

By these criteria, this volume is undoubtedly a success. It presents an interesting mixture of works which generally make good sense as a collection, presenting as they do those items of the ordinary of possible English origin which appear (alongside the two Bedyngham items) in Trent 90 and 93 and which are yet to have been edited for EECM. Two items are also included which appear in the slightly younger source Trent 88. The first of these, a Kyrie labelled M20,² is a valuable addition. The Kyrie has, by various scholars (and indeed the scribe Johannes Wiser),³ been suggested to have been related to Bedyngham's Mass on *Dueil Angloisieux* which also appears in Tr90 (though seemingly as a later addition).⁴ Whilst the possibility of it having originated as part of the cycle is rejected by the editors the decision to include it here, since it has long been associated with the cycle, is ultimately valuable since it enables the reader to weigh the evidence for themselves.

The other movement to be included from Tr88 is the Sanctus S57 which has no such links to the earlier Trent volumes. Stylistically, it also sits outside of the general corpus of this volume. Whilst the manuscript context of the work—it occupies part of a group of English works in Tr88—is clearly English, I am not entirely convinced by the style of the music. As the editors note, the behaviour of

¹ *Secular polyphony 1380–1480*, ed. David Fallows, *Musica Britannica* 97. London: Stainer & Bell / Musica Britannica Trust, 2014.

² The Mass labels are taken from Gareth Curtis and Andrew Wathey, 'Fifteenth-Century English Liturgical Music: A List of the Surviving Repertory', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 27 (1994), 1–69. They are a particularly valuable addition to this volume and make it far easier to navigate the world of often-anonymous, similarly named works. A revised version of the handlist by James Cook and Peter Wright, updated to include more-recent scholarship, may be found on Early English Church Music's website: <http://www.eecm.ac.uk/sourcesdatabases/database11400-1500/>.

³ See p.73 for an outline for scholarship regarding the Kyrie's relationship to the cycle.

⁴ The two movements, apparently copied here as a Gloria-Credo duet, appear in what Peter Wright has termed the 'appendix' of the manuscript, see Wright (2003), 294–304. In general, Wiser tended not to repeat movements he recognised as part of a cycle between Tr90 and Tr88, that he apparently did so here, and separated out the movements into two groupings in Trent 88, suggests he did not consider this a Mass cycle.

the contratenor is far from usual in comparison to the other works in the volume, continually sitting below the Tenor with which it shares a clef. This is clearly not the 'contratenor bassus' type voice that we see in both English and continental works from c.1465 onwards, but rather the usual continental-type contratenor,⁵ complete with the quintessentially Burgundian octave-leap cadence. The copious imitation—often structurally important—too stands far closer to continental than English practice. Its application in the duple duet sections of this movement in particular bringing to mind aspects of Dufay's works. Nonetheless, for all the apparently continental aspects it does very clearly make use of the English figure, both prominently and repeatedly. It therefore justifies its inclusion in this volume as an example of a presumably continental work adapting a common English figure. Nonetheless, it does stand out as a slightly newer work than its compatriots in this volume.

The question of provenance is, as ever for this repertory, one that looms large in any discussion. The approach taken by the editors, to collect together Mass items of a similar style copied into the same manuscripts, which show 'apparent English characteristics', seems to me eminently sensible. As I have argued elsewhere,⁶ there seems to be a large number of Mass cycles which have characteristically English features alongside those which seemingly rule out English provenance. Nonetheless, to understand them fully, we must consider them within an English context, and publication under the auspices of EECM therefore does seem the most natural position. The question of provenance for those Masses which are included is discussed in a useful manner in this volume. Nonetheless, I would have liked a discussion of those Masses *not* included and an outline of the rationale for exclusion. Perhaps the most obvious omission is the three movements of a supposed cycle on *O quam suavis* from Tr90 and Tr93. It is a far from unproblematic cycle, certainly, with much that seemingly rules out obvious English provenance. But, of course, the same could be said of the Gloria and Agnus on *Paratur nobis* which is here included. It seems unlikely that either truly is English, but both have aspects of English style that require explanation. Perhaps the editors do view *Paratur nobis* as closer to English style than *O quam suavis*, but it would have been of considerable interest to know the reasons why.

As with his compatriots, one the greatest questions to answer for Bedyngham is the degree of contact he had with continental Europe. As the editors note, it is far from clear that he himself was known abroad, though his music clearly was, since his name is so infrequently given in continental copies of his works, in poetry, or in theoretical treatises and, where it is, it is seldom spelled correctly. Whilst I concur with the editors that there is little evidence that the three *Johanni* found in Ferrara, or indeed any other continentally present musician, may be identified as Bedyngham (p. xi), I would argue that some aspects of his musical style do point towards some kind of contact with continental music. Firstly, Bedyngham is seemingly the only English composer of this period to use a continental song—namely Binchois' *Dueil Agnoisseux*—as the model for a Mass. Whilst I would argue for more contact across the Channel than has previously been accepted, and Binchois seems to be one of the few continental composers for which some English contact can be demonstrated,⁷

⁵ For a discussion of voice ranges and grammatical function in the English repertory see James Cook, 'Three-voice textures in the mid-15th-century English Mass cycle', *Early Music*, 45/1 (2017), pp. 41–54.

⁶ James Cook, *Mid-Fifteenth-Century English Mass Cycles in Continental Sources*. PhD Thesis: University of Nottingham, 2014. Available through DIAMM.

⁷ The Duke of Suffolk employed Binchois to compose the rondel *Ainsi que a la foiz m'y souvient* for him in 1427, whilst in French territories (see David Fallows, 'Binchois [Binchoys], Gilles de Bins [Binch, Binche] dit' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*). Binchois' *Vostre tres doux regart* is mentioned twice in the poetry of the English poet Skelton, and its tenor is found in the Ritson and Harley manuscripts (see Peter Wright, 'Binchois and England: Some Questions of Style, Influence, and Attribution in his Sacred Works', in *Binchois Studies*, ed. Andrew Kirkman and Dennis Slavin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 87–8.

this is still a significant point. Similarly, Bedyngham's *Sine nomine* has several aspects more common in the continental repertory than the English. The departure from its prevailing mensural plan in the Sanctus is one such issue, and this movement also divides the text with mensural changes at the common continental, rather than English position. Similarly, this is one of only three English *Sine nomine* cycles to avoid a stratified texture.⁸ This is not proof of a continental sojourn, of course, and it may simply point to a greater mutual traffic between England and the continent than has previously been afforded, but Bedyngham surely has at least a somewhat cosmopolitan outlook.

In all, this volume is an excellent addition to the series. It makes available in edition several works for the first time and therefore invites renewed scholarly appraisal of many important works. It also sets a new critical approach for the open inclusion of works that may very well not be English, but which can usefully be placed alongside English works, and this to me seems both valuable and practical. The critical material is copious and well thought out and should be noted for some important new archival insights into the life of Bedyngham, and a new suggestion for his date of death. The use of the pilcrow as indicator of page breaks (a new innovation within EECM's fifteenth-century series) is also extremely useful. This is a volume which will be useful for the performer too (individual works may be downloaded from the Stainer & Bell website with license for performance). The notation, though still not common-practice for every choir, soon yields to a degree of diligent attention, and its advantages far outweigh its challenges.

Binchois' music also has several instances of often reciprocal borrowing with English works. Power's motet *Anima mea liquefacta est* borrows from Binchois' *De plus en plus* (see Shai Burstyn, 'Power's *Anima Mea* and Binchois' *De Plus en Plus*: A Study in Musical Relationships', *MD*, 30 (1976), 55–72; cited in Wright (2000), 88, fn. 4.). A Kyrie once thought to be of English provenance appears to quote from Binchois' songs *De plus en plus* and *Se j'eusse un seul peu d'esperance* (see Craig Monson, 'Stylistic Inconsistencies in a Kyrie Attributed to Dufay', *JAMS*, 28 (1975), 245–67; cited in Wright (2000), 88. This Kyrie is discussed at length in Wright (2010), 185–214 where its English origin is questioned.). A Binchois Credo in Tr92-1 borrows heavily from the Ritson Carol *Pray for us, thow prince of pesse* (see Robert Mitchell, *The Palaeography and Repertory of Trent Codices 89 and 91, together with Analyses and Editions of Six Mass Cycles by Franco-Flemish Composers from Trent Codex 89* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Exeter, 1989), 223; cited in Wright (2000), 88, fn. 6). See also Andrew Kirkman, 'Binchois the Borrower', in *Binchois Studies*, Andrew Kirkman and Dennis Slavin (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119–37.) A Binchois Sanctus-Agnus pair in Tr92-1 is clearly linked, in some way, to a Sanctus-Agnus pair in Egerton, though it is unclear which pair has priority (See Bukofzer (1950), 142, cited in Wright (2000), 90, fn. 11.) Furthermore, Binchois sets the favoured English text *Ave regina celorum* and perhaps even used the Sarum version of some chants (See Wright (2000), 90, esp. fn. 14.)

⁸ Cook (2017), *passim*.